

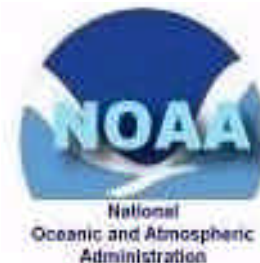


Tormenta Encantada

Enchanted Storm

North and Central New Mexico Hazardous Weather Newsletter

Spring 2002



National Weather Service Office Albuquerque, New Mexico

"Wait a few minutes and the weather will change." That's the commonly heard statement about weather in New Mexico. Our spring newsletter will focus on prospects for seasonal weather changes and also technology changes that are in the works.

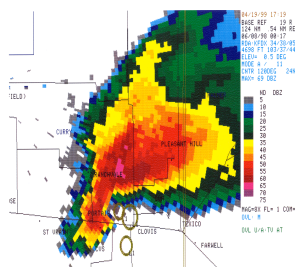
Hazardous Weather News – Keith Hayes

Except for dry conditions which have enhanced the wildfire danger and brought worrisome low reservoir levels, it's been rather quiet regarding hazardous weather the past several years across north and central New Mexico.

Prospects for a big reversal in our precipitation chances appear low, but we still must stay ready for those sudden and dangerous spring storms that bring high winds and blowing dust to the central and western counties and thunderstorms with hail and occasional high winds or tornadoes to the eastern plains. The gusty winds have already whipped large wildfires, so we have additional areas across the region that face unusually heavy flash flooding over and downstream from the fresh burnt areas and those still recovering from fires the past several years.

Our SKYWARN spotter training has fallen with the absence of severe thunderstorms. If your area hasn't had recent training then please contact me, Keith Hayes, for an update.

Some of you may have noticed the change in all the National Weather Service Office internet web pages. A corporate web page format was recently installed by all offices so that everyone seeking information will find an easily recognizable scheme no matter which NWS site that you access. An additional important change has



been the inclusion of real-time weather radar displays. You can now easily access both the reflectivity and velocity data from the Albuquerque or Cannon AFB-Clovis weather radars providing primary coverage for New Mexico from Farmington and Gallup east to Clayton, Clovis and Roswell.

Since it's been several years since we've had an active spring or summer severe weather season, everyone should take time during the upcoming Severe Weather Awareness Week (April 15-19, 2002) to review and renew their personal and community weather safety plans. Homes, schools, churches, hospitals and other care facilities, businesses and community centers should all have designated shelter areas. Everyone should review or learn the actions needed to keep one

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Seasonal Outlooks Spring 2002

Bleak Snow Melt Runoff – Ed Polasko

A generally dry autumn followed by a drier than normal winter will likely result in a poor spring snow melt runoff for New Mexico.

Based on snow surveys by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and precipitation reports from NWS cooperative observers, northern New Mexico and southern Colorado spring runoff is forecast to be one of the five worst of the past 25 years.

Two other factors will limit the springs runoff. Lack of fall precipitation left the ground dry, so some snow melt will first be absorbed to make up for this ground water deficit. Dry spring winds will continue to evaporate the snow pack before it melts.

For the month of March, only the southeast quarter of the state has received significant moisture. A dry trend elsewhere including the headwaters of the major New Mexico rivers and streams has a good chance to persist through the spring.

The impacts of less runoff will affect reservoir levels and the availability of irrigation water. The overall dryness has already led to an early start of the fire danger season.

The Return of El Niño – Charlie Liles

By now you've heard the hype. El Niño is coming back. Warm water that had been "building" beneath the equatorial Pacific the past 18 months has finally made it to the surface, and it appears another El Niño has developed. What will the impact be on New Mexico?

Historically, El Niño tends to bring wet weather to New Mexico. Most of the effects are felt during the cooler time of the year, from October through April. However, there is always a lag between development of El Niño and its impact on the weather. While there is an outside chance El Niño could bring wet weather to New Mexico this spring, the impact of this new El Niño is not very likely until next fall and winter. El Niño doesn't seem to have very much impact on New Mexico's summer,

although one study concluded El Niño tends to bring slightly above normal summer precipitation to southern New Mexico, and slightly below normal precipitation to the northern counties.

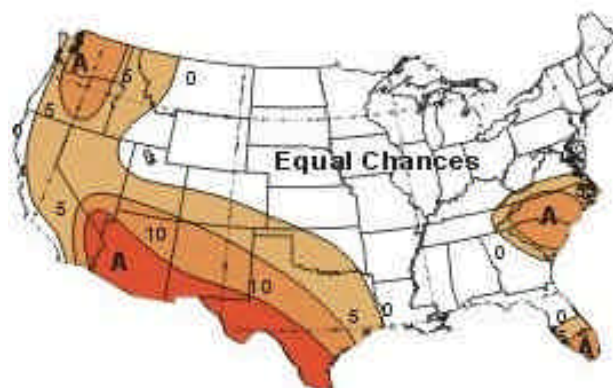
In the mean time, with nearly the entire state experiencing drought conditions, the spring forecast doesn't favor an end to the drought. The fire danger is already abnormally high, and weather forecasters as well as the fire-fighting community are expecting an early, severe fire season in New Mexico. If we get lucky, El Niño might begin to impact New Mexico and bring some spring rainfall. More likely is that fire danger will be very high until the thunderstorms of July.

Latest long range forecasts are available from the Climate Prediction Center (CPC) at :

<http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov>

Monitoring and Data | Index | Monthly and Seasonal Temperature & Precipitation Outlooks (Color version)

April - June 2002 Temperature



April - June 2002 Precipitation



New Technologies beginning Spring 2002

New Voices for the NOAA Weather Radio — *Kerry Jones*

The National Weather Service (NWS) has selected new, improved voices for NOAA Weather Radio (NWR). The voices, which are more human-sounding than the current voice, will help NWS to deliver warnings, watches, forecasts, and other hazardous weather information more quickly and accurately. The two new voices, dubbed "Donna" and "Craig," were chosen based on nearly 20,000 Internet survey comments received from the public. In the NWS public opinion survey, 95% rated Craig's voice number 1 or number 2. For the female voice, Donna, the percentage was 80%.

Implementation of the new voices on NOAA Weather Radio programmed from the NWS Albuquerque Office is expected by **May, 2002**.

IFPS: The Interactive Forecast Preparation System — *Clay Anderson /K Hayes*

The National Weather Service has begun a new era of forecast preparation. This new system, known as IFPS, allows the NWS Albuquerque forecaster to interact with national and global model data to produce a regional digital database covering northern and central New Mexico.

The data produced from a specialized and regional database will provide many benefits to both our forecasters and our customers.

Instead of spending considerable time typing numerous products and concentrating on the details of formatting these products, forecasters will be able to focus on meteorological analysis and interpretation. A common digital database will be prepared through interactive editing techniques. Both text and graphical forecast products will then be generated and formatted from the regional digital database.

IFPS should yield greater consistency between forecasts and various other products. New model data will continually be ingested into the IFPS system creating a rolling database that forecasters will monitor and frequently update. Instead of waiting hours between scheduled updates customers will have access to these more frequent updates.

IFPS will also provide a foundation for the development of a new generation of grid-based forecast products including a national information database and infrastructure which can be used by other governmental agencies, the private sector, research facilities and the public community.

With the help of application programs, NWS forecasters and customers themselves may tailor current and new products to precisely meet their informational and timeliness needs.

For example, persons traveling by car would be able to generate a forecast geared precisely to their intended route and addressing the weather elements that would affect driving conditions such as rain or snow, wind and fog. Someone interested in sailing would be more interested in wind and lake conditions, while farmers and managers of land resources might wish specialized and local spraying and burning forecasts. During a HAZMET event, an emergency manager might generate a detailed wind and stability forecast for the incident location. The prospects and uses appear to be boundless.

Forecasters at NWS Albuquerque have begun training and we expect to begin producing our first routine IFPS based text and graphical products by summer. A complete transition to IFPS based forecast preparation is expected by the end of 2002. Customers will still have their familiar text based forecasts, but new graphics and customer driven text products will be coming on-line.



Are you *StormReady*?

Communities and facilities now have guidance on being prepared for hazardous weather.

The National Weather Service *StormReady* program is designed to arm America's communities with the communications and weather safety skills necessary to save lives and property. Contact us at the NWS Albuquerque Office or visit the on line information site at:

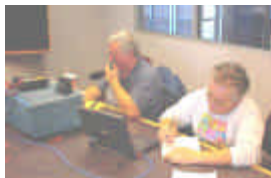
www.nws.noaa.gov/StormReady

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safe during threatening weather, plus practice your evacuations to protected facilities.

Start off your day by checking for severe weather information in your local forecasts. From April through September the **Hazardous Weather Outlook** is issued daily at 6 AM and discusses the risks and possible locations of damaging hail, wind, tornadoes and flash flooding during the next 24 hours. You can find this outlook and information needed for SKYWARN spotter activation on our web site at www.srh.noaa.gov/ABQ.

Amateur radio station WX5ABQ located within the NWS Albuquerque Office provides direct field reporting for SKYWARN spotters and emergency communications backup between the Albuquerque office and emergency coordinators. Amateur radio communications for your emergency operations center or other facility can be established through your local district coordinators of either the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) or Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES).



SKYWARN Spotters

Weather spotters remain essential to our efforts to provide timely and effective warnings for severe thunderstorms, flash floods and other hazardous weather. When properly trained, they become our "eyes in the field". Good candidates for spotters include law enforcement officers, volunteer fire departments, amateur radio clubs or any group with effective and rapid communications. In New Mexico, even an individual living on a remote ranch can be a very effective spotter. Specialized training in severe thunderstorm recognition and reporting procedures is available. Emergency Management Directors can schedule your spotter class or get help in starting spotter groups by contacting your NWS Albuquerque Office.

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Available online at www.srh.noaa.gov/ABQ

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2002 Calendar

- ◆ April – June, 2002 ... SKYWARN Spotter Training
- ◆ May, 2002.....New Voices for Weather Radio
- ◆ April 15, 2002 New Mexico Severe Weather Awareness Week
- ◆ June 16, 2002New Mexico Flash Flood and Lightning Awareness Week
- ◆ June – December, 2002..... IFPS Forecast Implementation

